

APPENDIX B. Focus Group Discussion Guide

MDPH State Health Assessment (SHA)
Discussion & Note Guide
[NAME OF FOCUS GROUP/ADVISORY GROUP HERE]

Discussion Goal:

To identify the health needs/concerns and assets/programs/services that are most salient to consumers who serve on advisory boards and the public health professionals that serve them in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Facilitator/Note-Taker Instructions:

- Modify/adapt questions as appropriate to the advisory group's focus.
- For each question, facilitators should probe as indicated and appropriate. Please note that the questions are intended to serve as a guide, not a script.
- Keep within the allotted time.
- Take detailed notes on responses, focusing on key points, using the department template.

BACKGROUND SCRIPT

- Hello. My name is _____ from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health [OR from North Passage Associates/Health Resources in Action, a consulting organization assisting the Massachusetts Department of Public Health]. Thank you for participating in this discussion today. We really appreciate your time and feedback.
- As was mentioned during the presentation, we are doing a statewide health assessment. This effort will help the state health department gain national accreditation by assessing the health of our state's residents, then using this information to set priorities for health improvement and to develop ideas to address problems through collaboration with partners from communities and organizations across Massachusetts.
- We are conducting discussion groups with folks like yourself from different geographic areas in the state to understand different perspectives about health issues affecting the communities you belong to or serve. We are interested in hearing your feedback on issues specific to your community or the people you serve as well as any insight you have about the main issues you think affect the health of Massachusetts residents overall.
- I want everyone to know there are no right or wrong answers during our discussion. We want to know your opinions, and those opinions might differ. This is fine. Please feel free to share your opinions, both positive and negative. We greatly appreciate your honesty and openness with us so we can paint as accurate a picture as possible for the assessment.
- Our discussion will last about 45 minutes. What we learn through these discussions will help guide the state health assessment and planning process, and key themes will be incorporated into the health assessment report. No names or organizations will be connected to anything that any one person said in the discussion. Any quotes we put in the report will be presented anonymously. Additionally, nothing sensitive that can be connected to any organization or individual will be

discussed in the report. However, at the end of the report, we will list _____ as an organization that contributed to the assessment.

- Do you mind if we record audio of our session today so we can make sure our notes are accurate? We will erase the recording once we complete our notes. This is optional, so if this makes anyone feel uncomfortable, we will just take handwritten notes.
- Do you have any questions before we begin? Before we begin, if you haven't already, please turn off your cell phones or put them on vibrate mode. Again, thank you for being here and sharing feedback with us. Let's get started.

INTRODUCTIONS

- Let's start by getting to know one another. Let's go around and introduce ourselves. Please tell me: **1) your first name;** and **2) an activity you like to do in your spare time.**

[AFTER ALL PARTICIPANTS INTRODUCE THEMSELVES, FACILITATOR TO ANSWER INTRO QUESTIONS]

IDENTIFYING TOP HEALTH ISSUES

- What are some of the biggest problems or concerns in your community?
 - PROBE: Are education, violence and trauma, built environment, social environment, and housing top issues in your community?
 - I heard you say that the most pressing health concerns in your community are[List what you heard them say] of these, if you had to pick 1 or 2 top health concerns, what would those be?
 - PROBE: Are chronic diseases or conditions, mental health, substance abuse, violence, access to healthy food, access to health care access top issues for your community?
- How have these health issues affected your community?
 - PROBE: Are some people or populations more affected by these health issues than others? In what way?
- What are the consequences to the community in not addressing these issues? What is the impact on the community you represent?

ADDRESSING TOP HEALTH ISSUES

- Thinking about the top health issues you mentioned, what is currently being done to address those issues for the community?
- What programs or services are available or organizations are working on the top health issues facing your community?
 - What specific organizations play a lead role in making people healthy in your community?
 - PROBE: Would you describe an example of something being done in your community to tackle the top health issues facing your community?

STAYING HEALTHY

- What makes it harder to be healthy?
 - Are there significant barriers to being healthy or making healthy choices in your community? What are those barriers?
 - Do folks in your community experience barriers in accessing health care services? What are those barriers?
- What programs, services or policies are missing in your community that would support health or make it easier to be healthy? [THIS QUESTION MAY HAVE ALREADY BEEN ANSWERED]

VISION OF COMMUNITY AND PROGRAM/SERVICE ENVIRONMENT

- Thinking about the future, if you could do one thing to improve the health of people in your community, what would it be?
 - If you could change or implement a new program, service, or policy, what would it be?
 - What organizations are/who is already leading this effort?

CLOSING

Thank you so much for your time and sharing your opinions. We really value your feedback and help in making the state health assessment successful. Before we end the discussion, is there anything that you wanted to add that you did not get a chance to bring up earlier?

On behalf of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the State Health Assessment Coordinating Team, I want to thank you again for your time.